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LOVE

How to Deal With Ask-Holes

YOU KNOW THEM —
EVERYONE FROM FAMILY
MEMBERS TO RANDOS WHO
FEEL THE NEED TO BUTT
INTO YOUR LOVE LIFE.
RESIST THE #EYEROLL AND
RESPOND TO PRYING
QUESTIONS LIKE THIS....

BY CATHERINE RYAN GREGORY

LOVE

YOU'RE...
SINGLE

"Have you found someone special yet?"

BLUNT

"No, apparently all the special ones are taken! But want to hear about the wild hookup I had last weekend?"

A dash of snark lets your interrogator know they're being intrusive—but a smooth change of subject also jumps over any awkwardness, says etiquette expert Elaine Swann, author of *Let Crazy Be Crazy*. With this response, you can get right into sharing a juicy anecdote from your dating adventures (what they really want to hear about anyway) and bypass any further probing about when Mr. Right is finally going to appear.

SUBTLE

"Nope, but being unattached gives me the freedom to do whatever I want—like learning to surf in Bali next month."

Put a hand to your heart to show sincerity when you're explaining that, yes, it is very possible to be single and happy. "Smiling, standing up straight, and using positive body language shows that you're self-assured," says Swann. You won't be second-guessed or have to field another attempt to set you up on a blind date with someone's random cousin.

YOU'RE...
HOOKING UP

"Are you two exclusive?"

BLUNT

"Why do you want to know? Are you interested in one of us?"

When your love sitch is firmly off-limits with a person, don't send mixed messages by offering tidbits of info anyway. "If your goal is to stop the conversation, you can't put any bait out there," says Swann. Then as soon as you can, transition to a positive discussion about the asker to show there are no hard feelings.

SUBTLE

"No, but I'm so busy between work and my photo class that I don't have time to date anyone else!"

With this script, you can be calm, even if your instinct is to react defensively, says Shasta Nelson, author of *Frientimacy*. Maybe you suspect your hookup doesn't have long-term potential. Rather than beating yourself (or your interviewer) up about how things are going, be chill. You're figuring it out, and uninvolved parties aren't invited.

YOU'RE...
IN LOVE

"When are you moving in together?"

BLUNT

"We both like our own space, so we have no plans to shack up anytime soon!"

Keep it candid, but be ready for the aftermath. Asks like these can make you feel confused about your own feelings and timelines, so it's crucial to root out why you want (or don't want) something, says Swann. Otherwise, you can find yourself giving in to other people's expectations and cruising Zillow for apartment listings when you're not yet ready to share real estate.

SUBTLE

"I'm not sure. It's a big decision to make."

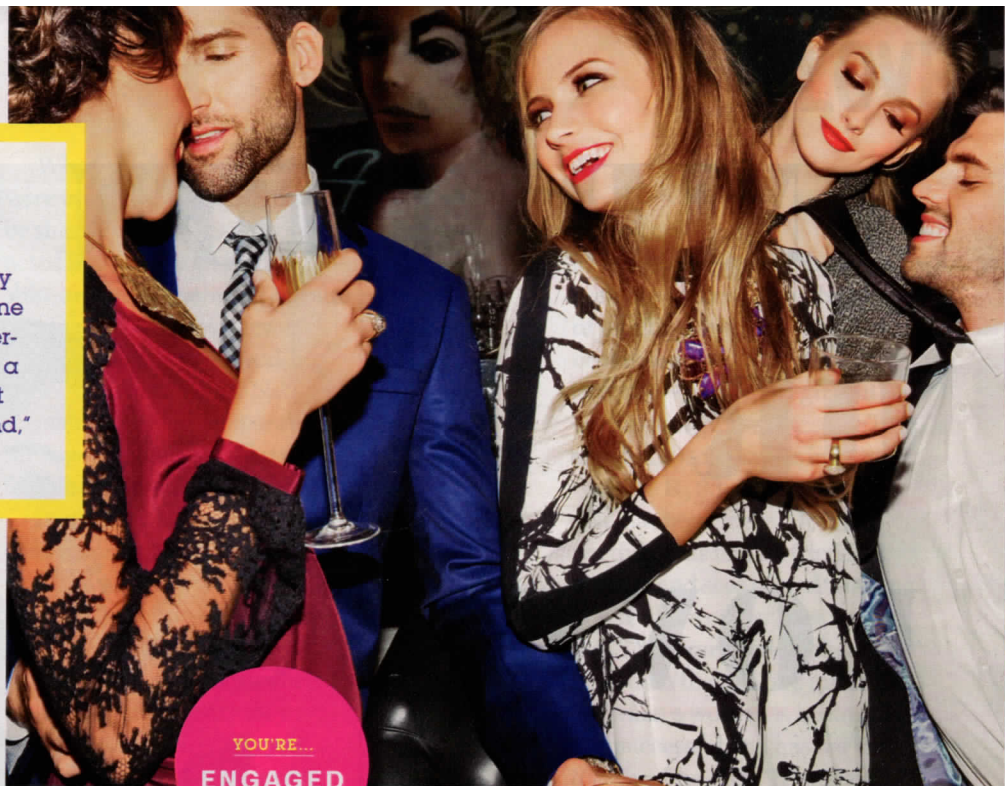
Instead of shutting down the convo altogether, acknowledge that you're still in the weeds and weighing your options. That's relatable (moving in is a pretty huge decision, after all!), and most people will respect your candor. If you're lucky, they may even offer advice that's legitimately helpful. In that case, you'll be glad you let them in.

Why Is Your Family So Nosy?

"Everyone has their own internal clock for when certain life events should happen," explains etiquette expert Elaine Swann. Some loved ones think asking will get you operating at their own speed. Others, like Grandma, may not be able to help it (no, really!). Recent research shows that as we age, we lose function in the area of the brain related to inhibition.

Why Do Strangers Even Care?

They don't know you, but they saw you walk in with a plus-one and are using that as a conversation starter. "What feels like a land-mine question may just be a search for common ground," says Shasta Nelson.



YOU'RE...
LIVING
TOGETHER

"Is he gonna put a ring on it?!"

BLUNT

"I know you ask because you care, but I promise you'll be among the first 100 to know."

Preface a straightforward plea to butt-the-eff-out with an offer to keep a persistent wonderer (we'll guess—it's your mom) informed. It takes your romance off the table yet maintains a solid bond with the person asking, says Nelson. Plus, your guarantee helps make the person feel like they won't be left in the dark.

SUBTLE

"If I had a dollar for every time I was asked that, we could pay for the wedding!"

A mix of humor and a not-so-subtle clue that this topic is obnoxious allow you to vent your frustration over everyone's eyeballing your left hand. It's also better than a quippy "Why don't you ask him?" because the person actually might!

YOU'RE...
ENGAGED

"Have you set a date? What are your colors? Did you write your vows?"

BLUNT

"I can't keep it all straight—I have a spreadsheet so I don't have to think about it."

People would rather ask questions than risk seeming rude for not caring, says Nelson. So they may err on the side of asking... everything. Dish only as many details as you want.

SUBTLE

"I'm up to my eyeballs in Pinterest inspo. What do you want to hear about?"

Teasing out their motive can make the inquiry less annoying and help you decide how much to share. If someone is asking so she can drone on about her own nuptials or give unsolicited advice, don't say much. But if they seem genuinely interested, talk tablescapes!

YOU'RE...
MARRIED

"Are you trying for kids yet?"

BLUNT

"Only my eggs and his sperm know that answer!"

This is an ultra-thorny topic, because it can be fraught for many couples, says Swann. Creating a human being requires sex, luck, and reproductive processes. And if you don't want kids, simply say, "We've decided our family is complete as is."

SUBTLE

"Whenever it happens, it happens. In the meantime, I'm enjoying my tequila."

Let people know that there's no news at this point, but they'll hear when there is. Pointing out the things you're enjoying while not under mama-to-be lockdown shows you're not sweating the pressure.